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SMALL BUSINESS EXPANSION PROJECT

SMALL BUSINESS EXPANSION PROJECT

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This quarter, preparations for the upcoming regional conference on adventure travel, which will take place in May 2016 in Ohrid have started building up. The conference was officially announced at ATTA's World Summit in Chile in October, in front of more than 700 participants from over 50 countries. Starting from the summit itself, as well as afterwards, interest among tour operators to attend the conference in Macedonia has been high, as the country and the wider Western Balkans are still considered a less known, but an intriguing new adventure travel destination. In the context of promoting the region, the Via Dinarica trail was also showcased. SBEP has been working on extending the trail into Macedonia, which promises great development potential, as the trail has been named "**Outside** magazine's Best New Trail in 2014, **Paste** magazine's best trekking path in 2015, and a 2016 must see by both **Wanderlust** magazine and **The Guardian**."

After the summit in Chile, activities related to the upcoming conference in Ohrid and coordination between partners on the ground has intensified. SBEP is working



The AdventureNEXT Balkans conference was announced during ATTA's World summit in Chile, that took place in October



The Via Dinarica trail was presented in Chile as well, with Macedonia being the latest addition

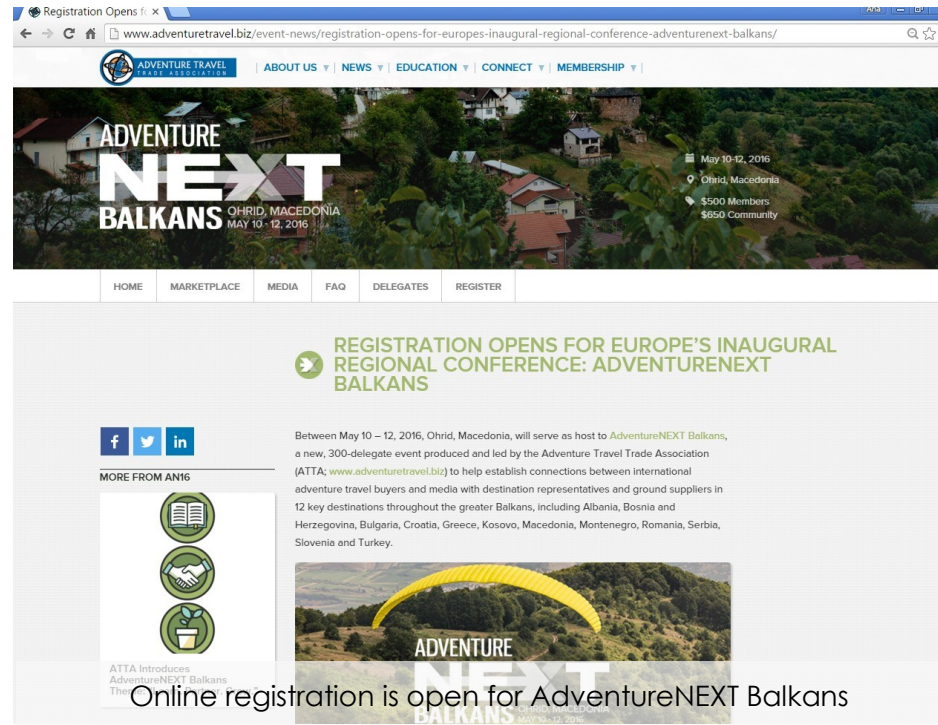
IN A NUTSHELL

- ➔ Macedonia was announced as the host of AdventureNEXT in Ohrid next year during the annual ATTA World Summit in Chile.
- ➔ The Via Dinarica trail, which is being extended into Macedonia with SBEP's support was also promoted.
- ➔ A Professional Conference Organizer (PCO), which will manage the logistical aspects of the conference was selected in December.
- ➔ The list of sponsored conference delegates has been populated; it includes major tour operators and media outlet representatives.
- ➔ In January, ATTA will hold a two-day workshop with the tour operators and destination representatives participating in the AdventureNEXT event.
- ➔ ATTA is currently adapting a portion of its web-site, which will serve for online registration of the participants for the conference and all accompanying events.

MACEDONIA ADVENTURE TRAVEL

closely with the National Agency for Tourism, the Swiss Funded IME Project, and ATTA representatives to make sure that the event is organized according to international standards.

In discussions with the partners, it was decided for SBEP to take over the logistical organization and coordination of the event. For that purpose, SBEP conducted a procurement process for hiring a Professional Conference Organizer (PCO), which will be responsible for the smooth functioning of all the moving parts. Six companies requested the tender documentation and attended the meeting that SBEP organized for clarifying any questions the companies may have. Of the six, three submitted proposals. The committee responsible for reviewing the proposals asked two of the three companies to provide further information and upon receiving the revised offers, decided to hire *New Moment* from Skopje. In addition to managing the general logistics of the event, the PCO will provide expert advice on identifying transportation and audio/video companies, which will be additionally contracted by SBEP.



Online registration is open for AdventureNEXT Balkans

New Moment representatives will also attend the one and a half days workshop, which will be conducted by ATTA and take place in January. It will be intended for all the local and regional stakeholders that will participate in organizing the conference or provide services and content for the delegates. The idea is to make sure everyone has the same understanding of what the conference should look like and what it should offer.

This quarter, it was also agreed that instead of creating a website from scratch for the purposes of registration and reservation of adventure activities and accommodation, ATTA would modify a portion of their website. The modification should be completed early next year and open for participants to use once the itineraries with the providers of pre-, post- and day of adventure activities are finalized.

The list of hosted delegates has been completed, and it includes 45 representatives of international tour operators that are considered among the highest quality in adventure travel

globally, as well as 16 top quality journalists from influential media outlets specializing in adventure tourism (full list on next page).

Detailed information about the conference is published on <http://www.adventuretravel.biz/events/adventurenext/balkans-2016/>, including updates on activities and sessions that will be on the conference agenda, as well as lists of attending buyers and attending media.

MACEDONIA ADVENTURE TRAVEL

LIST OF HOSTED TOUR OPERATORS ON ADVENTURENEXT IN OHRID 2016

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Mountain Travel Sobek, USA | 23. SNP, Netherlands |
| 2. Abercrombie & Kent, USA | 24. Cosmopolis, France |
| 3. Ciclismo Classico, USA | 25. Austin Adventures, USA |
| 4. Spiceroads, Thailand | 26. Macs Adventure, UK |
| 5. Go Barefoot Travel, UK | 27. The Clymb, USA |
| 6. BikeHike Adventures, Canada | 28. EAD - TERRES D'AVENTURE, France |
| 7. ASI Wirklich Reisen/Alpinschule, Innsbruck Austria | 29. Susana Conde - Agrotravel Turismo Responsable, Spain |
| 8. Travel Leaders - Industry Partner/ Consortium, USA | 30. J&T Concierge Monaco, France |
| 9. ROW Adventures, USA | 31. Aventyrsresor AB, Sweden |
| 10. Women's Own Adventure, Australia | 32. Melanie Tucker-Rare Finds Travel, USA |
| 11. Greenloons, USA | 33. Summer Feet Cycling, USA |
| 12. BikeTours, USA | 34. Evergreen Escapes International, USA |
| 13. Butterfield and Robinson, Canada | 35. Faralong.com, Estonia |
| 14. TGK Tour operator, Brazil | 36. Travel Leaders, USA |
| 15. Adventures in Good Company, USA | 37. Cyclomundo, France |
| 16. Culture Xplorers, USA | 38. Rahhalah Explorers, UAE |
| 17. HF Holidays, UK | 39. Saddle Skedaddle, UK |
| 18. TSC World Travel Leaders, USA | 40. Experience Plus, Italy |
| 19. KE Adventure Travel, UK | 41. Wild Frontiers, UK |
| 20. WomanTours, USA | 42. Allibert, France |
| 21. Lost World Adventures, USA | 43. Baumeler, Switzerland |
| 22. REI, USA | 44. Kultur and Natur, Germany |
| | 45. Outside Go, USA |

LIST OF HOSTED JOURNALISTS ON ADVENTURENEXT IN OHRID 2016

1. USA, Tim Neville - NYTimes (Outside Magazine and more...)
2. USA, Jackie Laulainen - Budget-Minded Traveler, Yahoo Travel
3. USA, Jordan Campbell - Outside, Backcountry, Climbing, Outside, Men's Journal, Elevation Outdoors and Wend
4. USA, Jayme Moye - National Geographic Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Men's Journal, New York Magazine, Fodor's Travel Intelligence
5. USA, Gary Arndt - Everything, Everywhere
6. UK, Brana Vladislavjevic - Lonely Planet
7. UK, Lyn Hughes - Wanderlust
8. UK, Yvonne Gordon - Guardian
9. CA, Mark Sissons - Freelance: Globe & Mail
10. DE, Florian Sanktjohanser - German Press Agency
11. SWE, Kicki Lind - Swedish newspapers
12. FR, Bernard Franz - i-trekkings
13. CA, Margot Pfeiff - Lonely Planet, enRoute magazine, Canadian Geographic, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, The Globe and Mail
14. AUS, Angela Saurine - Freelance, Escape, Australian Newspapers
15. FIN, Hendrik Morkel - Hiking in Finland + magazines and blogs in UK & DE
16. SP, Javier Gozales - Oxygen Magazine

MACEDONIA ADVENTURE TRAVEL

IN A NUTSHELL

- SBEP provided support to the Ministry of Agriculture in preparing a set of policies and supporting activities related to the so-called 50/50 measure, intended for the procurement of drip irrigation systems for growing corn, sunflower and forage cultures.
- In November, SBEP and the Ministry organized a joint meeting with farmers to present draft sets and measures, and set dynamics for the following years.
- The unofficial announcement regarding the sum allocated for the 50/50 measure for 2016 is 16.818.000 MKD (approximately US\$ 305.000).
- In December, SBEP organized a number of educational sessions in six regions across Macedonia, gathering some 150 farmers interested in learning more about the drip irrigation for corn and how to apply for government subsidies for buying the equipment.
- The south leg of the extension of the Strezhevo irrigation system began in the municipality of Novaci.

This quarter, SBEP provided support to the Ministry of Agriculture in preparing a set of policies and supporting activities related to the so-called 50/50 measure from the National Program for Financial Support of Rural Development. The purpose was to improve the measure, so as to enable a larger number of interested farmers to apply for subsidies when buying drip irrigation systems for growing corn, sunflower and other forage cultures. The improvements were towards lowering the threshold for minimum applications from 2 to 1 hectares, increasing the ceiling from 10 to 20 hectares, as well as increasing the funds a farmer is allowed to apply for.

In this context, a meeting was held in November with farmers and representatives of the sub-sectors that are heavily reliant on corn for feed (dairy, pork and poultry) to present and discuss the improved measure and the developments needed in the coming years to substitute the import of corn. It was agreed that drip irrigation is crucial for growing corn and that it will be subsidized by the 50/50 measure with substantial financial support. An initial amount of 16.818.000 MKD (approximately US\$ 305.000) was allocated in the National Program for



The meeting at the Ministry brought together farmers and representatives of the sub-sectors that are heavily reliant on corn for feed—dairy, pork and poultry

Financial Support of Rural Development for the implementation of the measure, with more funds promised by the Ministry should the need arise. Once the Program is officially published, the Ministry and the Paying Agency will open the call.

In December, SBEP organized a series of educational sessions for farmers in six regions across Macedonia: Pelagonija, Vardar, Skopje, South-East, Polog and South-West region. More than 150 farmers attended the sessions, at which the results of the project activities were presented, as well as the financing possibilities for purchasing drip irrigation systems through the National Program. SBEP shared experiences to date and elaborated the criteria for applying.

GROW MORE CORN INITIATIVE



More than 150 farmers participated in the series of educational sessions SBEP held in six regions across Macedonia in December

SBEP also made sure that the sessions were attended by providers of drip irrigation equipment, such as Maganmak from Skopje and Shandul from Resen, who presented part of the equipment and their offers. There were also representatives of financial institutions such as the savings houses Mozhnosti and FULM, who shared information about the types of credits for agriculture they offer, as well as the ones especially aimed at the procurement of irrigation equipment.

More sessions will be organized in January, in the remaining two regions – North-East and

construction of an irrigation pipeline system in the rural municipality of Novaci. The first phase will be the extension of the southern leg of the pipeline to cover approximately 600 hectares with water from the Suvodol Lake, while the northern leg will be constructed next year and will use water from Strezhevo. Once completed in 2018, the project should cover

East, so that the farmers from across the country can be educated about the benefits of using drip irrigation to grow corn and how they can access financial support to purchase the equipment.

This quarter also saw the beginning of the

around 2,000 hectares of arable land. The implementation of this project is a follow up of SBEP's activity from 2013, through which PointPro consulting company developed a feasibility study covering exactly the expansion of irrigation systems in the municipality of Novaci.

On the ground, the farmers participating in SBEP's Grow More Corn initiative who were growing corn for grain, have completed the harvest. Despite the unfavorable weather conditions, the yields have been solid, with an average of 11 tons per hectare.



The construction of the first leg of the extension of the irrigation system in the municipality of Novaci started in November, as follow up to the feasibility study SBEP supported in 2013

GROW MORE CORN INITIATIVE

IN A NUTSHELL

- In the North-East region, the two pre-LAGs were officially registered this quarter. *Osogovski Lisec* covers the municipalities of Kratovo, Kriva Palanka and Rankovce, while *Aber 2015* includes the municipalities of Kumanovo, Lipkovo and Staro Nagorichane.
- In the Vardar region, the three pre-LAG groups have started discussing the structure of each of their public-private partnerships, their respective Statutes and chose the name of the LAG.
- In the Polog region, workshops continue with representatives from the three pre-LAGs.
- In Pelagonija, the Regional Development Center (RDC) is preparing an open competition for the pre-LAGs to apply with pilot projects, so as to build their capacities in preparing and implementing activities.

NORTH-EAST

This quarter, both pre-LAGs in the North-East region, which were formally registered last September, opened their respective offices, which will serve as hubs for the activities conducted by these public-private partnerships. The official opening ceremonies of both venues were attended by USAID Mission Director, Mr. James Stein, Swiss Embassy representative, Ms. Brigitte Hagmann, as well as the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Mihail Cvetkov. In addition, the mayors of the participating municipalities, representatives from the already established pre-LAGs in the other regions where SBEP operates, and the local pre-LAG members themselves were present.

One of the first activities that the *Aber 2015* pre-LAG is involved in, is the development of a web-site to promote the archaeo-astronomical observatory



In Staro Nagorichane, the LAG office is situated in the municipal building



On December 10, the official opening of the LAG offices in the North-East Region took place

of Kokino, together with the Museum of Kumanovo, and with SBEP's support. In addition to collecting existing materials, some new video footage was produced for the purposes of this project, as well as new texts were authored by the archeologist Jovica Stankovski, who had discovered the site in 2001. The web-site is intended to provide information about this natural and cultural heritage site and to attract both domestic and international adventure travelers who are interested to visit and learn more about it. The official promotion of the web-site will take place in January, when SBEP together with the Kumanovo Museum and the National Tourism Agency, will organize a workshop for tour-operators, in order to inform and prompt them to include it in their itineraries.

EU LEADER

At the same time, the other pre-LAG – *Osogovski lisec* - is cooperating in the preparation of another web-site *Discover Osogovo*, which will showcase the natural and cultural attractions of the Osogovo region. It will also provide useful information about this part of the country, inciting travelers to visit.

Both of these projects contain an economic development component, as attracting a larger number tourists to the region enhances the local economy.

VARDAR
In the Vardar region, the members of each of the three pre-LAGs held meetings to discuss the establishment of the private-public partnerships.



Vardar Region pre-LAG EU LEADER sessions		Topic	Number of participants		
			Total	Women	Men
Tikvesh Wine Valley (Kavadarci, Negotino, Rosoman, Demir Kapija)	Kavadarci 9 December 2015	Local Strategy Development workshop – session 1	17	10	7
Probaton (Sveti Nikole, Lozovo)	Sveti Nikole 11 December 2015	Local Strategy Development workshop – session 1	15	10	5
Vardar Leader (Veles, Gradsko, Chashka)	Veles 14 December 2015	Local Strategy Development workshop – session 1	15	10	5
Tikvesh Wine Valley (Kavadarci, Negotino, Rosoman, Demir Kapija)	Demir Kapija 18 December 2015	Local Strategy Development workshop – session 2	20	7	13
Vardar Leader (Veles, Gradsko, Chashka)	Veles 21 December 2015	Local Strategy Development workshop – session 2	10	8	2
Probaton (Sveti Nikole, Lozovo)	Sveti Nikole 25 December 2015	Local Strategy Development workshop – session 2	13	8	5

They made decisions about the number and profile of the founding members of the organizations, as well as how to recruit new members, so as to reach the required ratio of at least 51% private sector and civil society representatives.

In December, all three pre-LAGs worked on developing their local strategic plans. Each group had two sessions at which they assessed the local needs, did a SWOT Analysis, defined their vision and mission, etc. The consultant is currently putting together the strategic plans for each of the pre-LAGS.

EU LEADER

Upcoming are all there Founding Assemblies, and subsequently the official registration at the Central Register of Macedonia.

POLOG

The two pre-LAGs in the Polog region were also working on their strategic plans. As their colleagues in the Vardar region, both groups have gone through a similar process of assessing local needs, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, defining their vision and mission, etc. The members of the group that covers the territories

of Jegunovce and Tearce decided to name their organization *Scardus*, which is the ancient name of the Shara Mountain. The members of the pre-LAG consisting of the municipalities of Bogovinje and Brvenica have chosen the name *BB LAG* for their private-public partnership.

Also in Polog, the next step is to organize the Founding Assemblies of both LAGs and proceed with their official registration at the Central Register of Macedonia.

PELAGONIJA

In Pelagonija, the Regional Development Center (RDC) opened a call for project proposals intended for all three pre-LAGs from that region. The purpose is to help the newly established organizations build their capacities in writing and implementing projects. Each pre-LAG had to submit a proposal for a pilot project that would meet the LEADER requirements, i.e. be of interest to the communities in that micro-region and in accordance with the local development strategy. However, the submitted proposals did not yield the expected quality level. Therefore, SBEP recommended that the call is repeated and that the RDC staff give support and guidance to each organization to brainstorm ideas they consider feasible. This exercise resulted in a list of project ideas that was sent to SBEP for review and feedback about which idea should be further developed into a project proposal.

Once the project applications are developed and approved, implementation is expected to start early next year.



Group work presentation during one of the LEADER workshops with members of the pre-LAG covering the municipalities of Bogovinje and Brvenica

EU LEADER

This quarter, SBEP continued its ongoing cooperation with the National Park Mavrovo with regard to the wild gathered products initiative. The Park has requested SBEP's support in preparing and disseminating information among the Park's population about the necessity to go through the process of training and certification, in order to be eligible for a collector's license. According to the Park's policy, possessing a valid license and a contract with a

licensed buyer is a prerequisite for engaging in the collection of wild products from the Park's territory. Although SBEP has conducted a number of trainings with collectors residing in the Park, there is still a number of them who need to be trained. Also, all need to bear in mind that the licensing needs to be done each season. For that purpose, SBEP will help to develop posters and leaflets, which will be distributed in the communities across the Park.



This quarter, four trainings on sustainable collection were held, all in the Vardar region

IN A NUTSHELL

- ➔ The National Park Mavrovo has requested SBEP's support in preparing and disseminating information about the importance of training, certification and licensing for collecting wild herbs and mushrooms.
- ➔ SBEP will also assist the Park in revisiting the policy regarding the licensing of the companies interested in purchasing wild-gathered products, as two of the three have not shown the expected results.
- ➔ Four new trainings on sustainable wild herbs and mushrooms collection—all in the Vardar region—were organized. A total of 75 new collectors attended.
- ➔ To date, 1,704 collectors of wild-gathered products have been trained in 71 training sessions.

WILD-GATHERED PRODUCTS

At the same time, the Park plans to revisit the contracts with two of the three companies, which were licensed to purchase wild gathered products in the Park, as they have not shown the expected results. The company that manages the collection center in the village of Vrben and is licensed for buying mushrooms

from the local collectors, has been operating successfully, while the other two—licensed for buying wild herbs—have only bought limited quantities of products. Thus, they are directly affecting the livelihoods of a number of collectors, who depend on that income. At the same time, according to the Park's policy, new com-

panies are only allowed to apply when the next call is open, i.e. after the current two-year contracts expire.

For this reason, the Park will be reassessing its policy regarding the licensing of companies that will be allowed to purchase wild-gathered products from the Park. The purpose is to improve the environment for conducting this type of economic activity on its territory, both from the point of view of interested companies, and from the point of view of the local population.

SBEP will be also supporting the Park in preparing a brochure for sustainable collection of wild-gathered products aimed at visitors of the Park, who are interested in combining hiking and collecting wild products from the woods for their own use. The brochure will contain information about the species of herbs and mushrooms that are most commonly found in the Park and about the rules of sustainable collection, as well as the quantities allowed.

SBEP also continued with trainings and certification of collectors in sustainable collection practices. A total of 75 new collectors were trained, of whom 7 were women and 17 youth, all from villages situated in the Vardar region.



The third Collection Center in the National Park Mavrovo is in the village of Janche

WILD-GATHERED PRODUCTS

This quarter, SBEP's light manufacturing consultants continued pursuing matchmaking opportunities that would link local suppliers with local buyers, but also with companies from abroad. In the process, they make use of a number of approaches, including direct communication with companies to identify their needs for expanding or diversifying their supply chain; communication with government institutions responsible for FDI, who redirect requests from companies to the consultants; communication with international networks, such as *Scoutbee*, that provide information and linkages between companies.

Also this quarter, the consultants together with SBEP staff started planning **a suppliers' conference**, which would bring together around a dozen local and foreign buyers with some 50 to 70 local suppliers. Two and a half years into the initiative, and on the basis of the consultants' experience and findings from their work on the ground, the business environment is considered ready for such a gathering. The event would take place in mid-2016 and would provide a forum for companies to have one-on-one meetings with each other and explore opportunities for potential cooperation.

The consultants lobbied for support at the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs,

Vladimir Peshevski, who gave a green light for the idea and suggested that Invest Macedonia, the primary government institution in charge of attracting new FDI, is the official partner in this endeavor. The consultants also met with Invest Macedonia representatives and have already started working together on putting together the event. Macedonia's economic promoters based abroad will also be working on attracting foreign companies to join as buyers.

For the purpose of the conference, a B2B electronic platform will be created, which will be part of MAMEI's web page. It will be designed in a way that it can be utilized for other similar activities in the future, such as matching companies' demand and supply. The beta testing version should be ready by mid-February.

EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES

The cooperation with the global B2B service *Scoutbee* is ongoing: they have already started sharing leads coming from their members - approximately two a month - and the consultants are providing information about potential suppliers from Macedonia. After some discussions, it has been agreed that MAMEI will be the official partner of the platform in Macedonia. *Scoutbee* is also interested in participating in the suppliers' confer-

IN A NUTSHELL

- A **suppliers' conference** which will provide a forum for B2B meetings between a dozen local and foreign buyers and some 50-70 local suppliers is being planned for mid-2016. Invest Macedonia and the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs have expressed initial support for the idea.
- The consultants continue pursuing matchmaking opportunities for suppliers and buyers, including communication with foreign buyers, through leads suggested by Macedonia's economic promoters abroad and government institutions responsible for attracting FDI, as well as global B2B platforms such as *Scoutbee*.
- Support to local buyers and suppliers for developing local supply chains continues, as well as support to companies who wish to access available funds, such as the national Innovation Fund.

LIGHT MANUFACTURING

ence and is willing to bring companies interested in outsourcing production here.

The consultants have also been pursuing the leads received from Macedonia's economic promoters in Germany and the Netherlands. A Dutch based company which was looking for producers of airport transport carts, dollies, and other parts for the Turkish market, was linked by the consultants to Brako from Veles. After exchanging initial information, the Management Team of Brako visited the company in the Netherlands, to review the product range and discuss specifics such as order sizes and pricing. Discussions are ongoing, and another visit is due in January, with prospects of a positive development.

The consultants worked on a couple of leads – both from South Africa - conveyed by the Cabinet of FDI Minister Mickovski. The company that was looking for a facility for precision metal processing did not find a match in the proposed local supplier, so the consultants continued to look for a more suitable producer that could respond to the requirements. REHO, the other company, specializes in lighting and lighting solutions and is interested in finding local suppliers as well as in investing into the development of an R&D center in Macedonia. After receiving samples from REHO, the consultants provided



Demastil from Kriva Palanka has placed orders with two new tool shops this quarter

them with information and contacts from three companies. All three have already sent their offers, and currently await REHO's response.

The development opportunity provided by Asghar Consultants from Germany involving the production of a small tandoor furnace that the

consultants were exploring over the past period, did not succeed. The potential sub-suppliers of Koper from Negotino were reluctant to view it as profitable, given the low price and low quantity of the product. This resulted in a delay, which forced Asghar to place orders in China.

LOCAL SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

In terms of matching local suppliers with local lead companies, the consultants have been working with Brako from Veles and Demastil from Kriva Palanka to identify potential cooperation opportunities. Brako asked for assistance in identifying companies that could supply them with parts for their medical equipment line. The consultants proposed five companies and visits to Brako are expected in the coming period for further exploring the opportunities. Demastil, on the other hand, has already placed orders with two of the three proposed tool shops, and is planning to engage the third company as needed. It is a way of testing the quality of the tool shops and their products, and start building relations with new suppliers.

A couple of other companies that the consultants met during this quarter – such as ILS from Bitola and Mak Tojs from Leshok - expressed interest in learning more about the opportunities offered by the national Innovation Fund so as to apply for support for expanding operations.

LIGHT MANUFACTURING

After being officially registered in September, this quarter the *Egalité* Foundation resumed activities related to the identification of women and youth owned and/or run businesses in the Polog region that could benefit from the Foundation's support. In addition to finalizing the support of previously selected businesses, the staff has also identified a number of other potential businesses that were listed for review by the Women Advisory Board.

This quarter, the Board had one meeting in October, at which it reviewed seven interested applicants, and decided to support two: Aya Farm - a cow farm from the village of Pirok and Sassa Pack - a cardboard packaging producer from the village of Zherovjane. By the end of the quarter, Aya Farm received the new equipment: a milking machine, a milk-processing machine and a hay-collector, which will help them improve operations and expand production. The procedure for procuring a cutting machine for different cardboard packaging for Sassa Pack is ongoing. The Board also conditionally approved one more business – a play place for children in the village of Slatino. The proposal will be revisited at the next Board meeting, and reassessed in the light of the monitoring done in the meantime regarding real market opportunities and demand.

In November, SBEP has succeeded in getting the Municipality of Gostivar onboard the initiative and contributing US\$ 10.000 to the Foundation. It has

thus joined the founders of *Egalité*, the municipalities of Bogovinje and Brvenica, the municipality of Tetovo, as well as Ecolog and other private companies that have donated funds for the support of women and youth businesses in the Polog region.

The official signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Municipality of Gostivar, the *Egalité* Foundation and SBEP took place on December 17 in Gostivar, in the presence of the US Ambassador to Macedonia.



In addition to Gostivar, Ecolog has announced continuation of its financial contribution for the Foundation, which will materialize in the coming year. This maintains and solidifies the trend that this initiative has started in terms of the public and private sector working together on the economic development of the region, and especially supporting the economic empowerment of women and youth.

IN A NUTSHELL

- ➔ The newly established Foundation *Egalité* has started operations identifying and processing potential small businesses owned by women or youth that could benefit support from the Foundation.
- ➔ The Women Advisory Board had one meeting and selected two proposed businesses for support, plus one conditionally, which will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- ➔ The Municipality of Gostivar has officially joined the initiative, by contributing US\$ 10.000 to the Foundation.
- ➔ Ecolog has announced continuation of its financial contribution to the Foundation, planned for the coming year.

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SBEP routinely continues to gather relevant information from the ground so as to fill out the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). In addition to SBEP staff conducting field visits and maintaining communication with beneficiaries, SBEP's partners also provide their input. Please see Annex I for this quarter's numbers.

Activities and events are regularly documented and anecdotal data that is typically used to illustrate the Project's impact is also collected. SBEP continues to develop success stories about its activities and successes, and also updates the ones that were written a while ago and have further developed. Currently in the pipeline is the success story about the Women in Business initiative, which will be published next quarter in the weekly Kapital.



In October, SBEP staff held its annual work planning session, inviting partners to discuss activities and plans for the coming year

ADMIN UPDATE

In October, SBEP staff spent two days planning the work for the coming year. As usual, SBEP's partners attended the sessions, in order to contribute to the discussions on what had been accomplished and strategize on future actions.

October was also the last month when Mr. Carl Larkins was SBEP's Chief of Party. As of November 1, 2015, Ms. Mirjana Makedonska took over this management position.

- Annex I:** SBEP Performance Monitoring Plan table for current reporting period
Annex II: SBEP Activities and Events Calendar for current reporting period

MONITORING AND EVALUATION